

# Sports Eye Safety

Each year, hospital emergency rooms treat nearly 40,000 victims of sports eye injuries. Because some injuries are seen and treated at

outpatient clinics, the actual number of sports eye injuries may be two or more times greater than the reported estimate. For all age groups, sports-related eye injuries occur most frequently in baseball, basketball and racquet sports. Almost all sports-related eye injuries can be prevented. Whatever your game, whatever your age, you need to protect your eyes!



**Every little bit of physical activity helps**

## Play Hard ... Play Safe

From major league stadiums to small-town courts, America's favorite pastimes make great memories for many. But for more than 40,000 athletes, those memories are ruined by eye injuries, the vast majority of which could have been preventable.

In recognition of April's designation as Sports Eye Safety Month, the American Academy of Ophthalmology and Eye Physicians across the nation urge all athletes to wear appropriate protective eyewear.

"Athletes need to choose protective eyewear because eye injuries can be devastating, not just career ending, but life changing. Eye injuries are one of the leading causes of visual impairment in children. These injuries can end up ranging from abrasions of the cornea and bruises of the lids to internal eye injuries such as retinal detachments and internal bleeding.

Unfortunately, some of these athletes end up with permanent vision loss and blindness.

Athletes can now choose from various types of sturdy, lightweight, effective and fashionable eyewear. And when they have polycarbonate lenses and have been properly fitted by an eye care professional, eyewear does not hinder performance and can prevent 90 percent of sports eye injuries.



Basketball, football, hockey and baseball aren't the only sports that contribute to the thousands of eye injuries suffered each year. Soccer, tennis, golf and water sports are also dangerous to the eyes. Each of these sports require a different type of

protective eyewear, so see an Ophthalmologist or other eye care professional for eyewear appropriate for your sport.

Sports are the leading cause of eye injuries in children, but most sporting leagues don't require their young athletes to wear eye protection. Yet when they do, the occurrence of eye injuries is greatly reduced. So, until mandatory eye protection comes to your child's sporting league, it's up to you, as parents, to lobby for and protect your young athlete.

Some professionals, including NBA All-Star Kareem Abdul-Jabbar and NFL Hall of Famer Eric Dickerson, have already gotten the message that sports eye protection doesn't hinder performance, it protects eyes and careers.

UV radiation is most in the winter and spring, than it is in the heat of the summer. In fact, it is almost 17 times as bad in the winter and spring, than summer months. Also, at noon, the amount of radiation is ten times more than during other hours. Altitude also increases radiation, with an increase intensity of 16% for every 1000 meters above sea level. This compounded with the reflection of snow, and the winter and spring months make the biggest risk for UV radiation damage. Thus, those participating in winter sports should take the necessary precautions.

**Whatever your game, whatever your age, protect your eyes with appropriate protective eyewear.**

Sport	Type of Eye Protection
Badminton	Sports eyeguards with polycarbonate lenses
Baseball	Polycarbonate faceguard (attached to helmet) for batting and base running Sports eyeguards with polycarbonate lenses for fielding
Basketball	Sports eyeguards with polycarbonate lenses and side shields
Bicycling (LER)*	Sturdy street frames with polycarbonate lenses and a strap to secure them to your head
Boxing	None available
Fencing	Full face cage
Field hockey	Full face mask (wire or polycarbonate) for goalie
Football	Sports eyeguards with polycarbonate lenses for all others
Full-contact martial arts	Polycarbonate shield attached to a faceguard or helmet

<b>Handball</b>	<b>Not allowed Sports eyeguards with polycarbonate lenses and side shields</b>
<b>Ice Hockey</b>	<b>Helmet and full face (wire or polycarbonate) mask</b>
<b>Lacrosse (male)</b>	<b>Helmet and full face (wire or polycarbonate) protection required</b>
<b>Lacrosse (female)</b>	<b>Sports eyeguards with polycarbonate lenses required Helmet and full face protection (wire or polycarbonate) recommended</b>
<b>Outdoor</b>	<b>Glasses or eyeguards that block 99 to 100 percent of the full UV spectrum</b>
<b>Paintball</b>	<b>Sports eyeguards with polycarbonate lenses required Full face protection recommended</b>
<b>Racquetball</b>	<b>Sports eyeguards with polycarbonate lenses and side shields</b>
<b>Skiing</b>	<b>High impact resistant eye protector</b>
<b>Soccer</b>	<b>Sports eyeguards with polycarbonate lenses and side shields</b>
<b>Softball</b>	<b>Polycarbonate faceguard (attached to helmet for batting and base running) Sports eyeguards with polycarbonate lenses for fielding</b>
<b>Sport shooting</b>	<b>Sport eyeguards with polycarbonate lenses</b>
<b>Squash</b>	<b>Sports eyeguards with polycarbonate lenses</b>
<b>Street hockey</b>	<b>Full face cage for goalie Sports eyeguards with polycarbonate lenses for all others</b>
<b>Swimming</b>	<b>Swim goggles</b>
<b>Tennis (doubles)</b>	<b>Sports eyeguards with polycarbonate lenses and side shields</b>
<b>Tennis (singles)</b>	<b>Sturdy street frames with polycarbonate lenses and a strap to secure them to your head</b>
<b>Track and field (LER)</b>	<b>Sturdy street frames with polycarbonate lenses and a strap to secure them to your head</b>
<b>Water polo</b>	<b>Swim goggles with polycarbonate lenses</b>

<b>Wrestling</b>	<b>None available</b>
<b>Yard work (lawn mowing or hedge trimming)</b>	<b>Sturdy street frame with polycarbonate lenses</b>

**\*Low Eye Risk**

If the sport in which you or your child participates requires helmets or face masks, the American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that sports eye guards with polycarbonate lenses also be worn, particularly in the case of one-eyed athletes, or those who have had eye injury or surgery. Athletes who have had eye injury or surgery, or who have good vision out of only one eye should not participate in boxing, wrestling, and full-contact martial arts.

Contact lenses and regular street glasses do not provide adequate eye protection. Neither do glasses without lenses or eye protectors that are yellowed with age.

Protective eyewear might be needed for other sports, too. Check with your ophthalmologist, optometrist, or other health care provider if you or your child participates in a sport not listed

**Sources:**

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3. A Special Focus on Paintball and Eye Safety, American Academy of Ophthalmology, 2001. Available online at: [http://www.medicinenet.com/Medical/article\\_detailb.cfm?article\\_ID=ZZZD5TRRSKC&sub\\_cat=104](http://www.medicinenet.com/Medical/article_detailb.cfm?article_ID=ZZZD5TRRSKC&sub_cat=104).
4. What You Can Do To Protect Your Eyes, American Academy of Ophthalmology, 2001. Available online at: [http://www.medicinenet.com/Medical/article\\_detailb.cfm?article\\_ID=ZZZ5JXSWIOC&sub\\_cat=32](http://www.medicinenet.com/Medical/article_detailb.cfm?article_ID=ZZZ5JXSWIOC&sub_cat=32).